

Across the waves and into the blue

By **Tarsha Storey**
Correspondent

The fishing boat rocked back and forth on 10-to 15-foot waves, threatening to toss its passengers into the ocean. One occupant, a child, was sea sick and scared.

Airman 1st Class Adalberto Ruiz, 20th Communications Squadron, said he came to America from Cuba when he was 9 years old.

The day he left, Airman Ruiz said his mother was preparing him and his sister, Anaben, for their afternoon nap when his father rushed them outside where several trucks were waiting. He fell asleep in his mother’s arms, only to awaken at the fishing port, puerto de Puerto Padre.

Airman Ruiz said his family climbed aboard an old rusty boat his uncle used for fishing. When they were about 20 feet from shore, the Cuban coastguard began firing at the boat, grazing his uncle and causing chips of the boat to fall into the water.

“After two days at sea, I started to become accustomed to the smell – strong, musky and crude – like regurgitated fish that had been evenly spread throughout the deck and cabins of the overly-



Photo by Tarsha Storey

Airman Ruiz came to America when he was 9 years old.

cramped fishing boat,” said Airman Ruiz.

A storm broke out that night, said Airman Ruiz. He watched torrents of rain and massive waves battle each other while the fishing boat struggled to stay afloat, caught between the two. As the storm raged, his family pulled him into a cabin where he fell asleep.

Airman Ruiz said he awoke the next

morning to hear his uncle, Ernesto, announce there was land in sight. Unfortunately, they had lost their way during the storm and the land they saw was the Bahamas. The next day, the shores of North America came into view.

After arriving in the United States, the family lived in Miami. They then moved to Columbia, Ga., to live with family, but eventually moved back to live in the Miami area, said Airman Ruiz.

Airman Ruiz said he made the decision to join the Air Force when his parents began talking about sending him to college.

“I joined the Air Force so I could go to college while getting paid. I have had many options here that I would not have had in Cuba,” said Airman Ruiz.

Airman Ruiz is currently awaiting the results of his test for U.S. citizenship.

“His citizenship will open the door for opportunities in the information management career field that offer greater challenges and more responsibilities. He will also have the right to vote, which will give him a voice in choosing our countries leaders,” said Airman Ruiz’s supervisor, Staff Sgt. Kellie Dumire, 20th CS NCO in charge of the base information transfer center.

Hispanic Heritage



Illustration by Virginia Reyes

Upcoming events

- Sept. 23** -- Hispanic Heritage dance from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Carolina Skies club
- Oct. 13** -- Hispanic Heritage luncheon at 11:30 a.m. at the Carolina Skies club

For more information on Hispanic Heritage Month, call Airman 1st Class Zenaida Nazario at **895-1537**.